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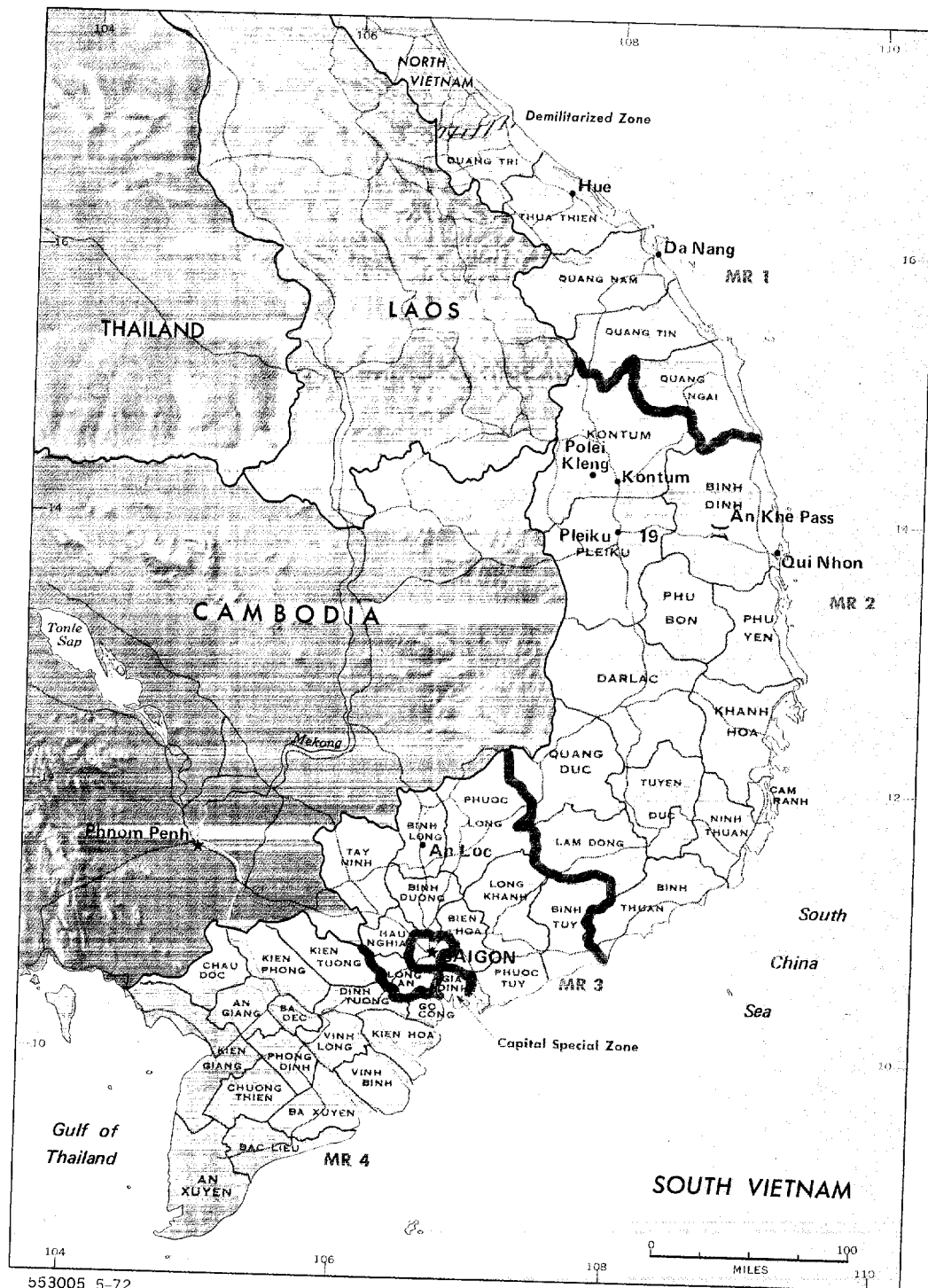
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VIETNAM: The Communists maintained pressure on the major battlefronts over the weekend mainly by shelling attacks, although enemy ground forces carried out two heavy assaults in the central highlands.

North Vietnamese sappers penetrated and heavily damaged one South Vietnamese strongpoint north of Pleiku. The government troops held on to the base, but suffered over 100 casualties. Northwest of Kontum City, South Vietnamese forces withstood another strong enemy assault at Polei Kleng; several hundred enemy troops were reported killed there.

The enemy is continuing to move large numbers of troops and heavy equipment toward Hue. Allied air forces are carrying out heavy attacks north and west of the city and reportedly have destroyed substantial numbers of tanks and trucks. The increasing tempo of enemy activity around Hue and in the highlands indicates that the Communists are trying hard to regain offensive momentum on these fronts.

There have been further reports of plans to step up attacks against Da Nang and in southern Binh Dinh Province. The Da Nang airfield was shelled lightly during the weekend. Authorities in the city are concerned that the enemy may be mixing in with the thousands of refugees converging there. In Binh Dinh, [] enemy forces have been infiltrating into Qui Nhon, the provincial capital, and there are signs that they intend to renew pressure in the An Khe Pass to block Route 19--the main South Vietnamese supply route into the highlands. The Communists may be planning attacks in these areas in conjunction with new thrusts against Hue and Kontum cities.

Farther south, the Communists recently have been hitting An Loc with more than 1,000 rounds of mortar and artillery fire a day. A prisoner taken

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Cover the weekend says that the commander of the Communist 9th Division has been reprimanded for his failure to seize An Loc and the enemy's 5th Division reportedly has been assigned the mission. A new drive against that city could begin with little additional warning. In the delta, action remained relatively light over the weekend.

* * * *

Propaganda from Vietnamese Communist outlets continues highly optimistic over the progress and prospects of the offensive in South Vietnam. Military action is now claimed to have opened up the possibility of "total victory," and is being compared to the battle of Dien Bien Phu, the anniversary of which was celebrated yesterday by the Communists. Although intended to prepare the Communist rank and file for further intensive military action, the propaganda probably also reflects a basically optimistic assessment on the part of the Communist high command of the progress of the military campaign after the first month.

Communist propaganda also is devoting increased attention to exhorting the South Vietnamese populace to rise up in "insurrection" in support of the military offensive. Most reports of enemy strategy have indicated that the Communists planned to push the political action side of their offensive only after a series of initial military successes had presumably made the populace more vulnerable to political agitation. According to the North Vietnamese military newspaper, the political agitation and the organization of liberated areas are now among the "most important" tasks in the offensive. [REDACTED]

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USSR - MIDDLE EAST: The USSR apparently does not expect this month's summit meeting with the US to register any genuine progress toward a Middle East settlement.

Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Y. D. Pyrlin told a US Embassy officer on 5 May that the Soviets were not devising new proposals at this time, and that he did not expect much on the Middle East to result from the meetings with President Nixon. Mohamad Oda, an influential Egyptian journalist, came away from Moscow last week with the same impression, following discussions with Soviet journalists and academicians. The Soviet position, judging from remarks by both Pyrlin and Oda, is that Israeli obduracy prevents any progress at this time.

Nevertheless, the Soviets could propose some way of lending impetus to the negotiating process in order to return to bilateral discussions with the US on the Middle East and to give the Arabs the impression that Moscow is taking an active part in the pursuit of a political settlement. One such proposal, currently rumored in Moscow, would call for reopening the Suez Canal if the Israelis agree to withdraw their forces from the east bank and do not insist on immediate transit rights. According to Pyrlin, the Egyptians would demand a presence of their own on the east bank, although a Jordanian Embassy official has claimed that Cairo is prepared to open the canal without such a presence.

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FEDAYEEN: Further airline hijackings have been threatened by yet another Palestinian commando organization. According to a Kuwaiti newspaper, a spokesman for the National Palestine Liberation Front has warned that his group will launch "physical protests" against airliners flying Jewish settlers to Israel, possibly within "a matter of days." Although fedayeen hijackings have occurred in the past, this is the first instance of public threats specifically against those carrying immigrants to Israel. Arab discomfiture over the flow of settlers has been apparent in recent months, and this threatened action serves as a warning to those countries that facilitate their influx. [REDACTED]

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